

SECTION 6

Instructions and Training Material for Administering the Functional Assessment of Cognitive Transit Skills (FACTS)

Introduction

In determining ADA paratransit eligibility for an applicant with a cognitive disability, transit agencies should review information provided by the applicant in the application form and the in-person interview. Information provided by appropriate professional familiar with the applicant should also be reviewed if this is provided. Follow-up with professionals might also be pursued, as needed, to obtain more specific information about the applicant's disability and functional abilities. Guidance provided in Section 4 of this workbook can be used to prepare for an in-person interview and to pursue additional information from appropriate professionals.

If information from applicants and professionals is not sufficient to make a thorough determination, transit systems may choose to ask applicants to participate in a functional assessment. The recommended tool for such an assessment is the **Functional Assessment of Cognitive Transit Skills (FACTS)** developed in 1996 for Easter Seals Project ACTION by Susan Chase from The Center for Applied Neuropsychology, Graham Ratcliff from Harmarville Rehabilitation Center and Karen Hoesch from ACCESS Transportation Systems, Inc. FACTS is the only assessment tool developed and validated to specifically predict the abilities of persons with cognitive disabilities to use fixed route public transit services. FACTS is also cost-effective in that it can be administered by a trained nonprofessional and information for setting-up and administering FACTS are available free of charge from Easter Seals Project ACTION.

This section of the workbook provides information about FACTS, instructions for downloading the FACTS documents from Easter Seals Project ACTION, and materials that can be used to train staff to properly administer the assessment. Included are:

- An overview of FACTS, including a discussion of appropriate uses and limitations.
- Detailed instructions, titled "Getting Started," for obtaining FACTS materials, and selecting and training staff to administer the assessment.
- "Helpful Tips for FACTS Administration."
- Two sets of training CDs – one set open captioned and one set without captions. The first CD, titled "An Introduction to FACTS Administration," provides instruction on how to properly administer each section of FACTS. The second CD, titled "Assessment and Scoring Exercise," contains an exercise that can be used in the training of staff who will be administering FACTS. Also included on CD 2 are blank response and score sheets provided as Word documents, and sample diagrams to assist you in correctly setting up posters used in one part of the assessment.

After reading the "Overview of FACTS," follow the step-by step instructions in "Getting Started" to obtain FACTS materials and to use the enclosed CDs to train selected staff.

Overview of FACTS

FACTS was developed and validated in 1996 in response to the need to evaluate, in a practical manner and with a reasonable degree of certainty, whether applicants for ADA paratransit possessed the relevant mobility skills to use fixed route transit independently, or under some conditions. An extensive review of the literature at the time indicated that no single functional test existed that was known to be a valid predictor of functional ability for individuals with disabilities that were primarily cognitive in nature.

In an ideal situation, a complete and thorough mobility assessment would be conducted in the natural environment by trained, qualified professionals such as travel instructors or Orientation and Mobility Specialists. This type of evaluation requires a competent, qualified travel instructor. Such professionals are not readily available in every community and this sort of real world assessment is time consuming and expensive. FACTS was designed as a practical, yet accurate alternative for predicting with a high level of accuracy how a qualified travel instructor would rate an individual's current independent transit skills. The rating of the travel instructor was considered the "gold standard" against which the results of FACTS were evaluated.

Reliability and validity of FACTS was determined by administering the test to 85 individuals with developmental cognitive disabilities, specifically mental retardation, whose current independent community mobility was independently determined by a professional on the basis of a full mobility evaluation conducted in the community specifically for this purpose.

For whom is FACTS Intended?

FACTS was normed with individuals with developmental cognitive disabilities – specifically mental retardation.

The term developmental disability functionally describes a condition of someone who has had one or more physical or mental impairments from an early age that are likely to continue indefinitely.

Mental retardation is the most common developmental disability. It involves substantial functional limitations in the areas of intellectual function and adaptive skill that are manifested before age 18. The American Psychiatric Association defines an individual with an IQ of 70 or less, using the Weschler Scales, as mentally retarded.

There has been no equivalent reliability and validation study to determine whether FACTS accurately reflects functional skill in individuals whose disabilities are not cognitive in nature (such as individuals with head injuries or those who have had strokes.) If used very conservatively, as one part of an overall assessment, considering FACTS scores could be appropriate if the results are used only to support the decision to screen an individual into paratransit service.

For example, an individual with a recently acquired head injury may have relatively intact intellectual functioning, but may not be able to control his impulses, and may have substantial short term memory limitations. Such an individual would be expected to score well on the community safety and skills portions of FACTS, but would have difficulty with the items that are taught and tested after delay, such as chaining together the simple trip and learning the route. Failure to perform these items would be consistent with the individual's disability, and performance on FACTS could support this conclusion. However, if someone with a head injury takes FACTS and scores in the range of an independent transit user (typically over 140 points) these results should not be used to deny eligibility to the applicant, and no conclusion should be drawn from the score.

Scoring Guidelines

If you are using FACTS as part of an ADA eligibility decision process, be sure to carefully read the document *Development and Validation of a Functional Cognitive Test*.

FACTS is not, by itself, intended to determine eligibility for ADA paratransit services. It is one element of a thorough process that includes information from the applicant, and from professionals and others who know and have worked with the individual.

In the validation study, individuals who scored 78 or fewer total points were always judged not currently able to independently use fixed route transit, and almost certainly not able to learn, even after travel instruction.

To ensure maximum sensitivity to the applicant and to ensure that an individual is never denied a level of eligibility to which he is entitled, it is recommended that the cut off scores be set higher as follows:

Unconditional eligibility

0-90 points

This is not to say that, after the complete review of an application, an individual who scores more than 90 points might be determined to be unconditionally eligible for paratransit. It also does not mean that the individual should be denied the opportunity to be trained to use fixed route, if appropriate. It does mean that you can have a very high degree of confidence that individuals who scored 90 or less have been properly classified as unconditionally eligible for ADA paratransit.

Getting Started

Begin by obtaining copies of the following FACTS documents:

- *FACTS – Development and Validation of a Functional Cognitive Test*
- *FACTS – Guidelines for Production, Administration and Scoring*

Both documents are available from Project ACTION and may be downloaded from the Project ACTION web site: www.projectaction.org.

As these documents explain, FACTS is administered using several slides and photographs. A complete set of the original slides taken in Pittsburgh, PA are available on a CD-ROM from Easter Seals Project ACTION. You can use these slides in your FACTS set-up or produce a set of slides and photographs specific to your area and system. If you decide to customize the photos for your own transit system and community, you should use the original set as an example to ensure that your photos are of similar quality and clarity. To obtain a copy of the CD-ROM with the original set of slides, call Easter Seals Project ACTION at 202-347-3066.

Development and Validation

Individuals who will be administering FACTS, as well as other transit managers associated with the ADA paratransit eligibility process should begin by reading “FACTS - Development and Validation of a Functional Cognitive Test.” This document provides a better understand of the key features of FACTS, the methods used to design FACTS, and the process used to determine that FACTS is a reliable and valid predictor. It also explains how results from the assessment are to be treated along with other information from applicants and professionals in making a determination of ADA paratransit eligibility.

Production, Administration and Scoring

Next, trainees and other staff should read “FACTS – Guidelines for Production, Administration and Scoring.” Managers should review the qualifications for potential administrators of FACTS outlined in this document and use this information to select individuals with appropriate qualifications to be administrators of the assessment.

Become thoroughly familiar with the guidelines for production, administration and scoring. Because FACTS is designed to be administered according to standardized protocol, it is essential that examiners adhere to the script and procedures in a scrupulous fashion.

The “Guidelines for Administration, Production and Scoring” document provides an inventory of materials and props necessary for FACTS. They are minimal, and the photos are the biggest

investment. If you produce the slides on a CD, you can administer FACTS using a PC or laptop in your office. You should be able to produce a customized version of FACTS for less than \$400. Guidelines are also provided for customizing the photos in FACTS for your transit system.

Finally, read, learn and practice the script. Although the response sheets provide a few cues, you must be able to accurately administer FACTS from memory. You will have to practice FACTS many times on co-workers and friends without disabilities before you are comfortable with the script and procedures. In addition to the script, you are responsible for making detailed behavioral observations, paying attention to and encouraging the applicant, thoroughly documenting responses and knowing when to discontinue FACTS. These multiple tasks can be challenging and require that you begin with a full command of the script.

*** * * * * Now you are ready to begin with CD 1. * * * * ***

Installing CD 1

NOTE: In order to watch CD 1 and CD 2, your computer must have any of the following versions of Windows: '98, NT4, 2000 or XP. You must have at least 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM and Adobe Acrobat installed on your computer. If you do not have this program on your computer, you can download it free by going to www.adobe.com, clicking on the icon labeled "Get Adobe Reader," and following the instructions to download and install the program. The CDs will not play on a Macintosh.

- The CD with **OC** on the label is the Open Captioned version. The other copy of CD 1 has no captions. Use the version that you find works best for you. The content is the same on both.
- Insert the CD label side up in the CD drive of your computer.
- Make sure your computer's speakers are turned on, and the volume level is set properly.
- When you close the CD drive, the CD should start automatically. If not, you may need to select the CD drive using Windows Explorer.

If you are using a computer that is older or does not have high speed, the video portions of the CD may appear choppy.

FACTS CD 1

A brief introduction to FACTS and the CD will play automatically. After this introduction, review each part of the FACTS assessment by clicking on the buttons on the left side of the opening screen. These buttons represent the main scorable sections of FACTS. Selecting a button will enable you to play only that portion of the CD and is designed to help you practice one section at a time, or review administration and scoring procedures for one section of FACTS, without having to repeat the entire assessment.

The sections are:

- Orientation Items (part one and two)
- Simple Trip
- Simple Trip Sequence
- Travel (Community Safety) Skills
- Complex Trip
- Complex Trip Sequence

An additional button with “FACTS Best Practices” is included to remind you of critical elements of proper administration and scoring of FACTS.

The FACTS Setup feature provides detailed instructions and 2 diagrams, included as Word documents, which you can print and use for proper set up of the posters used for the route. When setting up the posters for the route on FACTS, print these diagrams and use them as a “map” to set up the posters properly. Making sure that the posters are set up correctly is just as critical to the standardization of FACTS as adherence to the script.

Other buttons on the CD function as follows:

- The right facing arrow starts the CD
- The vertical parallel bars pause the CD
- The small circle under the video screen allows you to advance or go backward. Drag this using your mouse.
- The X stops the CD
- There is a volume adjustment bar on the far right side

FACTS CD 2

This CD provides an opportunity to view an entire FACTS assessment being administered correctly, and to participate by using the response sheet to record the applicant’s performance on each item.

The opening screen on CD 2 prompts you to print forms for the scoring exercise. Clicking on the “Print forms for scoring exercise” will start Adobe Acrobat (remember you need to have

Adobe Acrobat installed on your computer to read these forms). After you have printed the scoring forms, you can close Adobe Acrobat and return to the opening screen.

Click on “Continue” to see the full FACTS assessment. Using the “FACTS Response Sheet,” record the applicants responses in each part of the assessment. Note that there are a few sections of the assessment where you are not able to see the photos being selected by the applicant. For this reason, these sections of the Response Sheet are already filled out for you. After you have viewed the entire assessment and recorded the applicants responses, use your recorded responses to complete the “FACTS Score Sheet.”

After scoring the full assessment, the CD will prompt you to print a correctly completed Response Sheet and Score Sheet to compare to your sheets. Clicking on “Print Completed Forms” will again start Adobe Acrobat to allow you to print the completed forms. The system will not permit you to print the final, completed forms until you have watched the entire video on CD 2.

Finally, review your recording of responses and scoring of the assessment with your instructor. Discuss any differences between your responses and scoring and the completed forms provided on the CD.

Recording Behavioral Observations

During the administration of FACTS, an equally important component of the evaluation is the thorough and accurate documentation of the applicant’s behavior. An individual may perform very well and achieve a near-perfect score on FACTS, but may persist in inappropriate actions throughout the evaluation, such as touching the examiner repeatedly or inappropriately, even after being asked to stop. An individual with such problem behaviors would clearly not currently be able to use fixed route transit independently.

The task of documenting behavioral observations is equally critical to the correct administration of FACTS as proper administration and scoring. FACTS presents a unique opportunity to observe behavior in the context of learning and demonstrating new tasks.

Instructor’s Guide

The instructor’s guide portion of this workbook provides a thorough explanation for why each item was recorded and scored as shown on CD 2. As part of the training, each administrator should be able to explain the key considerations for the score assigned to each item. S/he should also be able to write a report including behavioral observations of the applicant that could be critical in the eligibility determination.

Following the completed training provided on both CD’s, staff should be able to accurately administer FACTS, record responses, determine the correct score, and write a final report including behavioral observations.

If you intend to have several individuals administer FACTS, it is important that they all be trained to proficiency to ensure inter-rater reliability. They must consistently demonstrate both:

- Reliability with each other
- Reliability with the correct answer

There should not be a variance of more than three points between assessors.

Helpful Tips for FACTS Administration

Before Greeting the Applicant:

- Set up the testing area. Make sure the slides are set to start at the beginning, the posters are arranged properly and that you have all of the materials on hand (bell, clock, post it notes for time, bus pass in holder, blank ID card, audio noise tape, photo album, pen, clip board and response sheet.)
- Record the applicant's name on the score sheet, along with the date and weather conditions. You'll need to know the weather if you ever have to refer to the accuracy of his response to the questions about the best clothing selection for "a day like today."
- If the FACTS assessment room is one that others use occasionally, post a note on the door advising that an assessment is in progress so you are not interrupted.

When Greeting the Applicant:

- Ask the person who accompanied the applicant not to respond to questions unless asked, in order for you to correctly evaluate the applicant's ability to provide information and respond to questions.
- If the applicant is unable to make eye contact or respond to your greeting, you should still ask him to accompany you to the testing area. If he remains unresponsive or is highly agitated and distracted, and requires physical prompts to get to the testing area or be seated, it is unlikely that he will be able to participate in FACTS.

You could discontinue FACTS at this point, but to show respect to the applicant, it may be appropriate to introduce the assessment and attempt to teach him to identify the bus stop. If he is still unresponsive or if you are unable to get and maintain his attention, you should thank him for trying his best, and discontinue FACTS at this point. Direct him back to the waiting area and thank him for coming.

Good FACTS Testing Skills Include:

- Have the script completely memorized before you test applicants. Do not attempt to read from the script while administering FACTS.
- Do not deviate from the script or procedures. FACTS is a standardized assessment and as such, is not valid if testing protocol is not consistently observed.
- Record responses and observations at the time – practice making marginal notes that will be an essential part of accurate scoring and your final report. Using the response sheet, complete the score sheet *after* administering FACTS – not during.
- Pay particular attention to behavioral observations. These are elements of the individual's performance not reflected in the FACTS score and can be an important part of the final determination.
- FACTS is designed to be engaging, and is discontinued when the competency of the applicant is exceeded. Be sure you discontinue FACTS when indicated in the script.
- Regardless of performance, treat the applicant with dignity and respect.